

The George Van Giesen House  
( Demarest Homestead)  
S.W. Cor. Terrace Avenue and Essex Street  
Hackensack, Bergen County, New Jersey

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
District of New Jersey

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Seymour Williams, F.A.I.A., District Officer  
133 Central Avenue, Rahway, New Jersey

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The George Van Giesen House  
(Alias Demarest Homestead)  
S.W. Cor. Terrace Avenue and Essex Street\*  
Hackensack, Bergen County, New Jersey

Owners: Mrs. Ernestine Wallenstein, Mrs. Augusta Groen  
and Miss Clara Groen, 895 West End Avenue,  
New York City

Occupant: Mr. Miller

Date of Erection: 1780-with alterations 1880-1907

Architect: Unknown

Builder: George Van Giesen (owner 1780-1799)

Present Condition: Original masonry walls remain;  
roof altered for finished 2nd story before  
1907; front porch not original. Two rear  
additions removed since 1906.

Number of Stories: Two

Materials of Construction:

Foundation - stone masonry  
Exterior walls - coursed ashlar red sandstone  
to eave line all around; frame gable ends  
Interior walls - stone party wall and frame  
partitions  
Chimneys - brick, built into inside of gable  
end walls  
Roof - gambrel, originally wood shingled,  
now tin covered

Historical Data:

The identification of the original owner of this house, a factor in determining its date of erection, has been stated variously in published accounts as having been (1) Stephen Demarest (1780-1834) and (2) George Van Giesen (1746-1799). Search of title to the property provides evidence in favor of the latter, and is reported as follows.

\*Formerly known as Polifly Road and Paterson Turnpike,  
respectively.

By his will dated 4 January 1775 and proved 10 May 1783, Reynier Van Giesen of New Barbadoes Township, Bergen County, devised his real estate to his six sons, 100 Pounds each to his five daughters, one-sixth of the estate during her lifetime to his wife Antie and appointed his sons Gerret, Isack, John and George as executors. (a) Apparently his house is the one shown and marked "Vangeesen's" on the northeast side of the road leading northwest from Hackensack (now Essex Street) on Erskine's survey map of 1778-79, a short distance above the intersection of the Pollifly Road. The house here surveyed does not appear on that map.\*

By deed of 12 March 1786, Garret Van Giesen and Isaac Van Giesen, both of Bergen County, conveyed or quitclaimed to (their brother) George Van Giesen of same County for 5 Pounds certain tracts of land including a "First Lot" described as "All those certain lot of land, swamp and meadow situate

(a) Abstracts of Wills, publ. in N.J. Archives XXXV, 162. Reynier Van Giesen, b. 17 Nov. 1704 and bapt. at Bergen, R.D. Church, youngest son of Isack Van Giesen of Bergen, Secaucus and Hackensack, by his 1st wife Cornelia Hendricks Blinkerhoff, was received as a member of the Ref. Dutch Ch. of Hackensack, 8 Dec. 1726, mar. there 1st 30 Mar. 1728 Hendrickje Van Dien, 2nd 26 Mar. 1744 Hester Couwenhoven and prob. 3rd 31 Oct. 1760 Annatje Van Winkel. He lived at Secaucus (Hudson Co.) where he owned an extensive tract of land including Snake Hill, but had removed across Hackensack River to New Barbadoes Township at the date of his will, 4 Jan. 1775. He was commission a Justice of the Peace for Bergen Co. 1745-1773, elected to the Provincial Assembly 1754 and 1761. His children by 1st wf. were: Cornelia 1729, Antje 1730 mar. Dirk Ranta, Gerret 1732-1812 of Secaucus, Vrouwtje 1735 mar. Philip Earl, Isack 1737-1811, Hendrick 1739-1812 of English Neighborhood, Willem 1742, and by 2nd wife were: Joannes 1744, Joris 1746 of whom further, Hendrickje 1749 mar. Isack Kip, Samuel 1750, prob. Cornelis 1752, and Rachel 1753. (Wm. Nelson, History of the City of Paterson and the County of Passaic, New Jersey, 1901, p. 267).

\*Map printed and issued by the Bergen County Historical Society 1920.

in the Township of New Barbadoes at a place called and known by the name of Pollifly, between the lots of land now in the possession of Lawrence A. Ackerman, as by several conveyances thereof made until the conveyance to Rynier Van Giesen, father of the parties of these presents, and the will and testament of the said Van Giesen, deceased."

Having thereby in 1786 come into possession of his share in this division of his father's real estate, George Van Giesen<sup>(b)</sup> who is said to have occupied about 1780 the house here considered (being evidently on the tract apportioned to him as above-said) held the same and devised it by will proved 1799 to his sons. Subsequently, by deed of 28 March 1804, the sons George and Daniel Van Giesen of Bergen County conveyed it to Peter D. Demarest of English Neighborhood, Bergen County or \$6,000. The tract is therein described as containing 124 acres and lying in New Barbadoes Township, bounded southeast by the Fresh Meadow, northwest by land of David Romine and southwest by that of Laurence Ackerman. The amount of the consideration money indicates the existence of a considerable house and improved farm.

The grantee Peter Demarest was residing in Hackensack Township (on the east side of the River of same name and not to be confused with Hackensack village on the west side thereof) at the date of his will, 12 March 1812, proved 10 September next, in which he devised to his son Stephen Demarest "the lot and tenements where he now dwells at Pollifly

(b) Joris (George) Van Giesen, bapt. 19 Oct. 1746 in the Hackensack R.D. Ch., 2nd son of Rynier Van Giesen and his 2nd wf. Hester Couenhoven, mar. Elizabeth Smit. In 1785 he and his bros. Gerret and Isaac apportioned of 357 a. tract of their late father's on the Secaucus Commons including Snake Hill. He resided near Three Pigeons (Hudson County) but about 1780 removed to Pollifly, occupying a stone house still standing on the Pollifly Road where it turns to Hackensack. (Nelson cited above p. 268). His children were: Hester bp. 4 Apr. 1773, Jannetje bp. 3 Apr. 1776, Reynier bp. 30 Dec. 1778 d. Young, George, Daniel bp. 23 Feb. 1783 and Rachel bp. 3 July 1785. (Register of R.D. Ch. Hackensack, publ. 1891.)

in (New) Barbadoes Township", with cedar swamp and meadow land "where I live in Munackye".

Stephen Demarest(c) who evidently had been residing on the former Van Giesen farm (here considered) since his father purchased it for him in 1804, continued thereon and by his will of 15 September 1834, proved 17 December next, devised the use of all his property to his widow Margaret, and thereafter to his son Peter Demarest, his heirs and assigns.

(c) Stephen P. Demarest, born 17 December 1780, bapt. 21 Jan. 1781 at Schraalenburgh, d. 15 or 19 Nov. 1834, 2nd of the 3 sons of Peter Demarest and his 1st wf. Annatie Van Hoorn, mar. 1st 27 Nov. 1802 at Hackensack Ch. Sophia De Mott who d. 9 Mar. 1814 ae. 33, and removed in 1804 from English Neighborhood to the farm house still standing on the Pollifly Road (in Hackensack). He mar. 2nd Margaret Ackerman widow Van Winkle who d. 24 Oct. 1856. By 1st wf. had children Peter born 5 Nov. 1803, d. 19 July 1805 and John born 19 Sept. 1806; and by 2nd wf. had Peter S. born 15 April 1817. (M.A. & W.H.S. Demarest, The Demarest Family, 1938 pp. 89 and 150). Stephen Demarest, son of Peter Demarest of English Neighborhood, now in Ridgely Twp., removed thence and settled the homestead at Pollifly, now Terrace Avenue and Paterson Turnpike, containing some 100 acres which was inherited by his only child Peter S. Demarest (Clayton Hist. of Bergen & Passaic Counties, New Jersey, 1882, p. 234). Compare:- "The ancestors of the Demarest family in Lodi Twp. came here shortly before the present century(\*) and located on the present homestead of the family at the junction of the Pollifly road with the Hackensack and Paterson road. The farm originally comprised about 200 acres for which Mr. Stephen Demarest paid \$3000." (Ibid. p. 233)

(\*) Search of title shows that the ancestor, Stephen Demarest, did not take possession of this former Van Giesen farm until 1804. The farm lay in that part of New Barbadoes Twp. set off as Lodi Twp. 1825 and annexed to Hackensack Town 1896. L.D.C.

Peter S. Demarest (d) only surviving son of Stephen Demarest abovesaid and devisee of his estate, occupied the homestead farmhouse here considered and by his will of 14 September 1867, proved 15 May 1868, devised the income of his estate to his wife Jane during widowhood and to his minor daughter Sarah Jane, all the residue of the estate equally to his children.

By deed of 19 April 1902, Stephen Demarest and wife Frances of Brookfield, Missouri, conveyed to (his brothers and sisters) Cornelius B. Demarest, Richard V.W. Demarest, Margaretta Dodd, Sarah J. Beatty and Garret B. Demarest, all of Hackensack, his share in the homestead lot in New Barbadoes Township, Bergen County, bounded north by Essex Street

(d) Peter S. Demarest, b. 15 Apr. 1817, d. 17 Jan. 1867, having mar. 20 Oct. 1841 Jane Bertholf who d. 1901, resided at Pollifly and had issue; Margaretta b. 6 May 1843, Stephen b. 19 Feb. 1845; Garret b. 10 Aug. 1847, Richard b. 12 Mar. 1850, William b. 9 July 1853, d. 11 Mar. 1854, Cornelius B. b. 31 Aug. 1855 and Sarah Jane b. 29 Jan. 1858. (The Demarest Family, cited above p. 222). "In the corner where Essex Street crosses the Pollifly Road, or Terrace Avenue as it is known, stands a stone house which is known as the Demarest place. Recent remodelings have destroyed much of its ancient appearance.....the property on which the Demarest house stands has recently been made into building lots, and eventually the picturesque stone house will fall a prey to the mania for improvement which has caused the destruction of so many of the historic homesteads of the county". (Papers & Proceedings of The Bergen C. His. Soc. No. 4, 1907-8, pp. 84-85, by B. H. Allbee). Peter S., only child of Stephen Demarest and his 2nd wf. Margaret Ackerman, widow Van Winkle, was born on the homestead settled by his father at Pollifly, 15 April 1817; there spent his life as a farmer and died 17 Jan. 1867. His wife is Jane daughter of Garret Berthold and Sally Myers of Hackensack Township, and she survives her husband and resides upon the homestead. The stone house erected by the family (sic), situated on Terrace Avenue, commands a fine view of Hackensack and the surrounding country. (Clayton, cited above).

and east by Polifly Road, and they in turn passed title to their sister, Margaretta Dodd of New Barbadoes Township by their deed of 24 August 1906, she evidently then residing on the homestead there. The last named as a widow, sold lots no. 1 to 6, 9, 10 and 30 into which the farm in New Barbadoes Township had been divided,\* to Solomon A. Groen of Manhattan, N.Y.C., by her deed of 8 February 1907, the 9 lots forming a tract having a frontage of 150 feet on Terrace Avenue and of 102.72 on the south side of Essex Street on which tract stands the house.

The grantee was residing in New Barbadoes on 31 March 1914 the date of his will (proved 29 Nov. 1926) in which he names his wife Augusta Groen and minor daughters Ernestine and Clara as heirs; and these three main as owners at the time of our survey of the house in 1940, during tenancy of a Mr. Miller.

Reference:

Search of title in land and probate records of Bergen County by Joseph Benenati, H.A.B.S. abstractor, reported 15 January 1941

*Leuro D. Cook*

Supervising Historian

Approved:

*Seymour Williams*

SEYMOUR WILLIAMS, F.A.I.A.  
District Officer

\* See Peter S. Demarest estate map no. 1028, filed in office of Bergen County Clerk 24 Sept. 1906.